Consumer Culture and the Media

Magazines in the Public Eye

Mehita Iqani

University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
# Contents

*List of Figures*  
viii  

*Acknowledgements*  
ix  

**Media in Consumer Culture: An Introduction**  
1  
The genre of consumer magazines  
5  
Magazine covers on newsstands  
9  
Scope and arrangement of this book  
12  

1 **The Public, Identity and Power in Mediated Consumer Culture**  
16  
The public in consumer culture  
17  
A space of visibility and appearance  
18  
A community of commodities  
21  
Consumption and identity  
25  
Consumers and practices of consumption  
26  
Self-management and identity in consumption  
29  
Power dynamics of consumer culture  
33  
The politics of visibility  
33  
Constraint and choice in consumption  
35  
The dialectics of mediated consumer culture  
37  

2 **A Research Approach for Mediated Consumer Culture**  
41  
Participant observation in mediated spaces of consumption  
41  
Blending into everyday life: A *flânerie* of newsstands  
43  
Making newsstands strange: Participant observation and photography  
45  
Analysing consumer media texts  
48  
Social processes shape texts  
49  
A multimodal approach to consumer media  
50  
The dialectic between ethnographic and text analysis methodologies  
58
3 Media Retail Spaces as Multimodal Spectacles:
The Case of the Newsstand 61
The social dynamics of newsstands 63
The spectacular semiotics of newsstands 64
World of goods 65
Abundance and chaos 67
A colourful dazzle 70
A facial space 71
A staccato voice 73
Newsstand semiotics 75
Media retail spectacles in consumer culture 77

4 Glossiness in Hyperreal Celebrity Portraiture 82
Celebrities on the magazine cover 83
Producing ‘perfection’: The mechanics of glossiness 89
Full-colour printing on glossy paper 89
Material techniques in the production of hyperreality 92
The discursive power of celebrity glossiness 96
Glossiness in consumer media 100

5 Commodity Choice and Commercial Heteroglossia in Consumer Media 103
Superlative objects: Commodities on the cover 104
Commodity-centred lifestyle scenes and narratives 108
Voice, choice and commercial heteroglossia 113

6 Sexiness and Selling: Consumerism's Pornographic Imagination 120
Beautiful bodies on display 121
Female sex-objects and post-feminist sexiness 121
Sexy masculinity 125
The politics of looking sexy 126
Visual consumption and the sexualized gaze 129
Eye contact: A network of gazes 129
Looking as a sexual act 131
The functions of the pornographic imagination in consumer media 133

7 Paper Mirrors: Images of Ideal Consumers 140
Face value: Hyperreal faces as ideal types 141
I contact: The language of direct address 148
The functions of paper mirroring in consumer media 153